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SUBJECT: (SBU) SHANGHAI OFFICIAL PRESSES CARTER ON EXPO 2010  
PARTICIPATION

¶1. (SBU) Summary: While in Shanghai January 15-16 to commemorate 30 years of U.S.-China diplomatic relations, former President Jimmy Carter heard a strong official plea to encourage U.S. participation in the 2010 Shanghai World Expo. Carter promised to pass along the request to President Obama and expressed his hope in a separate public forum that "the U.S. will participate strongly and equally to other nations". End summary

¶2. (SBU) During a January 15 meeting with former President Jimmy Carter, Shanghai Party Secretary Yu Zhengsheng thanked Carter for his role in normalizing relations, drawing a connection between China's "reform and opening" and good relations with the U.S. He asserted that "the financial crisis brought us closer" and noted that China hopes President Obama "can adopt right economic policies so China's economy will also turn for the better."

¶3. (SBU) Yu then expressed the hope that Obama will "pay attention to the Expo", explaining that the congressional prohibition on using appropriated funds for World's Fairs has made it difficult for the US to participate. [Background note: Shanghai World Expo 2010 is expected to attract 70 million visitors from May 1-October 31, 2010, with over 185 countries involved under the theme of "Better City, Better Life". Because the USG is prohibited by statute from spending appropriated funds to support a national pavilion, the department signed a letter of intent in April 2008 with a non-profit group to design and raise private-sector funds for a USA National Pavilion. To date, the non-profit group has not yet secured any funding commitments.]

¶4. (SBU) Continuing to press the topic in some detail, Yu added that Secretary Rice had "entrusted a team" to work on the pavilion, "but construction has encountered some problems." He urged Carter "the next time you see Obama, tell him to pay attention to the pavilion; tell the State Department to pay more attention. If there is no US pavilion, it would be a big regret, as we have very attractive pavilions from the EU." He explained that while "initial plans have been made, the U.S. hasn't signed a contract" officially confirming participation with a national pavilion. Repeating an offer previously extended by the Expo Bureau, the Party Secretary told Carter, "We will take the risk of building first. If the US doesn't commit we can convert to a restaurant, or better yet, a McDonalds." He concluded: "Please pass this on to Obama."

¶5. (SBU) Carter listened to the Party Secretary's urgings without questions, later asking the Consul General whether State or Commerce had the lead and why U.S. businesses, in particular Atlanta-based Coca-Cola, were not contributing. [Note:

Coca-Cola has committed to build its own corporate pavilion as a Premier Sponsor of the World Expo, rather than contributing to a USA Pavilion.] He promised the Party Secretary he would bring up the Expo with Obama, while cautioning in straight-forward fashion that it wouldn't be his "first priority" item to discuss with the new president. By the time the Expo issue was raised at an academic seminar on the second day, Carter offered a strong endorsement of U.S. participation and urged a change in what he termed a "peculiar law" prohibiting the use of appropriated funds.

¶6. (U) All major mainstream media in Shanghai covered former President Carter's visit to Shanghai in a very positive way, with Xinhua News Agency reporting January 16 that Carter "voiced his confidence regarding strong U.S. participation in the Shanghai World Expo to be held in 2010." Carter's remarks during the seminar and Q-and-A session with local scholars and university students were also reported in many papers' international news section.

¶7. (SBU) Comment: That the 2010 Shanghai World Expo was the main item on Yu's agenda for his meeting with former President Carter speaks to the importance that Shanghai officials place on U.S. participation. As a member of the Politburo, Yu has a key role on the national stage as well. Yu's message to Carter -- and his half-joking comment about turning the area reserved for a USA Pavilion into a McDonald's -- underscores the potential negative public reaction in China if there is no USA Pavilion at the 2010 World Expo.

CAMP